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Ministry of Advanced Education

PROVINCE ENDOWS NEW DRUG RESEARCH CHAIR $2.25 MILLION

VANCOUVER – The Province's $2.25-million investment in a new B.C. Leadership Chair will support leading-edge pharmaceutical research and the development of new drugs to help treat diseases like osteoporosis, cancer, Alzheimer's and heart disease, Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell announced today.

Dr. Robert Young is the Merck Frosst BC Leadership Chair in Pharmaceutical Genomics in Drug Discovery recipient at Simon Fraser University (SFU). He is a world-renowned scientist with 30 years of experience as a pharmaceutical chemist.

"Dr. Young's unique experience and scientific excellence will add a new dimension to the B.C. health research community, one that will help translate academic research discoveries into therapies that benefit the public," said Coell. "Government is committed to funding pioneering research that will enhance the lives of not only British Columbians but Canadians and people around the world."

Young's research will be directed at developing new drugs that will target specific diseases. His research will initially focus on osteoporosis and bone degenerative diseases. Osteoporosis afflicts 40-50 per cent of elderly females and 10-15 per cent of elderly males in Canada and results in a large toll in health care costs and impaired quality of life for sufferers.

Currently, osteoporosis drugs stop bone loss but do not in any significant way re-grow bone. Young is working on drugs that will stimulate rapid bone growth.

"This funding is yet another cornerstone of SFU's emerging role in health-related research," said Young. "SFU has already been pivotal in developing the biotechnology leaders of B.C. With this Chair and strong partnerships in the community, we hope to explore new options to treat the diseases that afflict mankind."

Funding for B.C. Leadership Chairs was established with an initial provincial commitment of $45 million for the Province's Leading Edge Endowment Fund. Twenty leadership chairs will each receive a total endowment of up to $4.5 million, which is cost-shared between the government and the private sector. Merck Frosst has committed $1 million for the naming of the Merck Frosst B.C. Leadership Chair in Pharmaceutical Genomics in Drug Discovery.

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This is the province's seventh B.C. Leadership Chair. Thirteen more B.C. leadership chairs will be announced by the end of 2008.

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